Variables Contributing to Abandonment and Readoption of SWPIBS

Angus Kittelman

M. Kathleen Strickland-Cohen

Sarah E. Pinkelman

Kent McIntosh

University of Oregon
Utah State University

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Address correspondences to: *Angus Kittelman,* anugsk@uoregon.edu 1235 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1235

Abstract

There is a dearth of research examining school and district factors associated with the abandonment of evidence-based practice in schools. In this mixed-methods study, we surveyed 23 school personnel working with 30 schools that abandoned and then readopted school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (SWPBIS). Our aims were to identify critical features abandoned and perceived reasons for abandonment and readoption of SWPBIS practices. SWPBIS features most often abandoned included data-based decision making and school-wide acknowledgement systems. Lack of staff buy-in was the most commonly reported reason for abandonment, and a new school administrator was the most commonly reported reason for readoption. Implications for research and how schools could safeguard against abandonment of evidence-based practices are discussed.

Keywords: School-wide positive behavior interventions and support, SWPBIS, abandonment, readoption, mixed-methods

Variables Contributing to Abandonment and Readoption of SWPBIS

Achieving consistent, high-quality implementation of effective educational practices can pose a significant challenge for schools and districts, and the transient nature of educational reform efforts has long been described as an obstacle to lasting improvements in student outcomes (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). Sustained implementation can be particularly elusive for educational institutions attempting to implement large scale school- and district-wide initiatives, due to obstacles such as teacher and administrator turnover and competing school, district, and state initiatives and priorities that change over time (Coburn, 2003). Successfully implementing and sustaining practices requires complex systems-level change to help safeguard against barriers to sustained implementation. This can be further complicated by the need to carefully consider and adapt the systems-level implementation drivers needed to support implementation during each stage of implementation (i.e., exploration, installation, initial implementation, and full implementation; Fixsen, Blase, Metz, & Van Dyke, 2013). Examples of these types of systems-level supports include: training and on-going coaching support for district and school leaders and school personnel, regularly scheduled meetings for team-based problem-solving, and the consistent use of data systems for on-going evaluation of fidelity of implementation and student progress (R. Freeman, Miller, & Newcomer, 2015).

To successfully implement systems-level initiatives, districts and schools must first build the infrastructure needed to support and maintain these changes, as simply layering new practices atop existing systems is unlikely to result in lasting change (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). Despite these recommendations, in effort to address the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of an ever-changing student population, schools often attempt to adopt and implement school-wide practices without first building the systems and supports

needed to fully adopt and sustain implementation over time. As a result, schools and districts dedicate valuable time and resources to implementing innovations only to abandon them, often before they are fully implemented (Nese et al., 2016). This continuous cycle of adoption-followed-by-abandonment can negatively affect student outcomes and can reduce staff morale and their much needed willingness to fully invest in new programs and initiatives in the future (Klingner, Boardman, & McMaster, 2013).

Abandonment of Educational Innovations

To help prevent the adoption and abandonment cycle, educational researchers have sought to better understand the factors associated with successful and sustained implementation of innovations in schools (e.g., Forman, Olin, Hoagwood, Crowe, & Saka, 2009; Langley, Nadeem, Kataoka, Stein, & Jaycox, 2010; Massey, Armstrong, Boroughs, Henson, & McCash, 2005). However, less is known about the specific factors that are predictably related to the cessation, or *abandonment,* of previously implemented evidence-based practices by schools and districts. Much of what is understood about abandonment comes from a small number of descriptive studies focused on identifying factors that have led to schools and districts discontinuing the use of effective practices following the removal of formal support from university researchers (Fuchs, Fuchs, Harris, & Roberts, 1996; Nese et al., 2016). These studies have pointed largely to district and systems-level variables as primary reasons for the abandonment of effective practices by schools.

Fuchs and colleagues (1996) described the abandonment of a district-wide team-based data decision making model that had been supported by the research team for three years. Despite demonstrating the ability to implement the intervention independently, experiencing positive school- and student-level outcomes associated with the teaming model, and reporting

high levels of overall satisfaction with the practices, the district abandoned the initiative when support from the researchers was faded (i.e., in the year following removal of support from researchers not one instance of use of the teaming model by study participants was recorded). The authors concluded that one of the primary factors leading to abandonment was the district's lack of capacity to provide ongoing training and coaching to support continued implementation. Subsequent descriptive studies focused on abandonment of effective school and district-wide practices have reported similar findings, pointing to district and systems factors such changes in district and state policy and leadership (Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey, & Liebert, 2006) and lack of district-level commitment (including failing to allocate sufficient funding to support valued initiatives; Santangelo, 2009) as barriers to the sustained implementation of effective practices in schools.

Variables at the school level have also been associated with the abandonment of educational innovations. For example, as part of a longitudinal analyses of 247 high schools, Newman, Zacamy, Lazarev, and Lin (2017) sought to identify variables that contributed to either the scaling up or the abandonment of Reading Apprenticeship Improving Secondary Education (RAISE), a school-wide academic literacy framework. Findings from the study indicated that a lack of early and sustained educator commitment, as measured by teacher report and attendance at monthly team meetings, was a primary determinant of the eventual abandonment of RAISE.

Research on SWPBIS Implementation and Abandonment

Another school-wide initiative that has been the focus of implementation and abandonment research is school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (SWPBIS). SWPBIS is a three-tiered systems-level approach focused on building safe and predictable school environments in which all teachers, staff, and students share a common understanding of

behavioral expectations (Sugai & Horner, 2009). Within the SWPBIS framework, the remediation of problem behavior is secondary to prevention and supporting the prosocial behavior of all students at the universal level (i.e., Tier 1). Behavioral interventions and supports are systematically intensified across Tiers 2 and 3 of SWPBIS for students whose needs are not sufficiently addressed at Tier 1. Critical features of SWPBIS include not only the use of data and implementation of evidence-based practices, but also the organizational systems needed to support the use of those practices to improve student and school outcomes (Sugai & Horner, 2009). For example, organizational systems would include providing adequate time and sufficient space for SWPBIS team members to meet regularly for school and student-level progress-monitoring and data-based decision-making. SWPBIS is currently being implemented in over 26,000 schools across the United States (Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2018), and research has linked its implementation to a number of positive student and school outcomes including: decreases in exclusionary discipline practices, increases in student attendance and academic performance, and improved school climate (J. Freeman et al., 2016; Gage, Whitford, & Katsiyannis, 2018; Mitchell, Hatton, & Lewis, 2018).

A number of studies have identified school and district factors associated with the sustained implementation of SWPBIS practices. McIntosh and colleagues (2018) recently identified factors at the school level, specifically Tier 1 implementation fidelity in Year 1 and school teams using data for decision making, to be significant predictors of the sustained implementation of SWPBIS in Year 3. In another study using structural equation modeling with a sample of 217, McIntosh and colleagues (2013) found district priority and district capacity building (i.e., district technical assistance) to be predictors of Tier 1 SWPBIS sustainability. At the district level, George, Cox, Minch, and Sandomierski (2018) conducted semi-structured

interviews with district coordinators supporting SWPBIS implementation. The authors found eight factors that administrators perceived as facilitators to SWPBIS implementation within these high performing districts, including district coordinators, coaches, district teaming, district team activities, leadership buy-in and support, district data infrastructure, direct support to schools, and communication (George et al., 2018).

Although research exists focused on examining factors related to the sustained implementation of SWPBIS, few studies have focused on factors related to school abandonment of SWPBIS practices. In the only large-scale abandonment study to date, Nese et al. (2016) examined school demographics (i.e., school type, school urbanicity) and implementation fidelity in Year 1 of implementation as predictors of abandonment of SWPBIS practices at Tier 1, using a sample of over 900 schools. School locale was the only statistically significant predictor of school abandonment, with urban schools being approximately 13 times more likely than rural schools to abandon SWPBIS. The authors also noted that all but one of the abandoning schools were classified as Title I (i.e., schools in which 40% or more of the student population are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch). Although Nese et al. (2016) provided an initial examination into factors predicting abandonment of SWPBIS, more research is needed to identify other malleable factors, such as district and school factors, that could be altered to safeguard against abandonment.

Readoption of Previously Abandoned Initiatives

A unique phenomenon associated with well-established and widely implemented educational initiatives is the potential for districts and schools to either choose or be asked to recommit to practices that they have formerly abandoned. Therefore, as the use of a practice becomes more widespread and the number of users continue to grow, it becomes increasingly

important to attend to not only factors associated with abandonment, but also those associated with the readoption (i.e., re-implementation of a previously abandoned initiative or practice) of those practices (Fixsen, Blase, & Fixsen, 2017). Schools and districts often abandon promising and effective initiatives due to factors such as changes in leadership, lack of staff commitment and time, inadequate data systems, or competing initiatives required by educational agencies or states (Charlton et al., 2018; Klingner, Ahwee, Pilonieta, & Menendez, 2003). Over time, schools may seek to readopt these practices once these contingencies have changed (e.g., a new school administrator is hired, or the district renews its commitment to implementation). School leaders seeking to *readopt* educational initiatives may face a different set of challenges than those seeking to initially adopt. For example, school personnel may be particularly reluctant to buy into and fully support practices that they have previously witnessed their school abandon and, therefore, may view these practices as ineffective or unlikely to be maintained over time. Prior to reimplementation, it may be particularly important for district and school leaders to be aware of the specific reasons why initial implementation was not sustained and to work with staff to address any barriers directly related to the previous abandonment.

Although previous research focused on the implementation of school-wide systems of behavior support has examined factors associated with the sustained implementation and abandonment of SWPBIS, no studies to date have specifically examined factors that may lead to the successful readoption of SWPBIS practices after they have been abandoned. The purpose of the current study was to identify factors related to not only the abandonment of SWPBIS, but also the readoption of previously abandoned school-wide practices. We asked school leaders and personnel who indicated that their school had readopted SWPBIS to describe factors that they

perceived as having led to the initial abandonment and later readoption of SWPBIS. Specifically, we asked the following research questions:

1. What critical features of SWPBIS were schools most likely to abandon?
2. What were the perceived reasons schools abandoned SWPBIS?
3. What were the perceived reasons schools readopted SWPBIS?

Method

Participants and Settings

Participants consisted of 23 school personnel who worked in 30 schools (two external coaches were working with multiple schools) that abandoned the implementation of SWPBIS or critical SWPBIS features (e.g., school-wide acknowledgement systems) and then readopted those practices at a later time. Ten (43%) of these participants were internal SWPBIS team members, six were school administrators (26%), four were school personnel who were not SWPBIS team members (17%), and three were external SWPBIS team members (i.e., external district or regional coaches; 13%).

Regarding the schools themselves, participants reported that most schools had abandoned SWPBIS for less than one year (n = 16, 53%), 11 (37%) had abandoned for 1-2 years, two (7%) had abandoned for 3-4 years, and one (3%) had abandoned for 5 or more years. The 30 schools were located in eight U.S. states, including Washington (n = 7), Minnesota (n = 6), Oregon (n = 6), Wisconsin (n = 4), Maryland (n = 3), North Carolina (n = 2), California (n = 1), and Missouri (n = 1). Twenty-seven of the 30 schools (90%) reported Tier 1 implementation fidelity for at least one of the first four years of the longitudinal study using a research-validated fidelity of implementation measure, including the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET; Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, Todd, & Horner, 2001), Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI; Algozzine et al., 2014), the

School-wide Benchmarks of Quality (BoQ; Kincaid, Childs, & George, 2010), the PBIS Self-Assessment Survey (SAS; Sugai, Horner, & Todd, 2000), and the Team Implementation Checklist (TIC; Sugai, Horner, & Lewis-Palmer, 2001).

According to the measurement studies cited above, schools were considered to be implementing Tier 1 of SWPBIS with fidelity if they had a score of 80% or higher for the SET, SAS, or TIC and/or a score of 70% or higher for the TFI and BoQ. In the first year of the longitudinal study, 25 of the 30 schools (83.3%) reported Tier 1 implementation fidelity using one of the five implementation fidelity measures, 20 of the 25 schools (80%) were implementing at fidelity, and five of the 25 schools (20%) were implementing below fidelity. In the second year, 23 of the 30 schools (76.7%) reported fidelity, 19 of the 23 (82.6%) were at fidelity, and four of the 23 (17.4%) were below fidelity. In the third year, 21 of the 30 schools reported fidelity (70%), 13 of the 21 (61.9%) were at fidelity, and eight of the 21 (38.1%) were below fidelity. During the fourth year, the year of the survey, 16 of the 30 schools (53.3%) reported fidelity data, and 10 of the 16 schools (62.5%) were at fidelity, and six of the 16 (37.5%) were below fidelity. For schools that reported using multiple Tier 1 implementation fidelity measures during each of the four study years, we used their score from the implementation fidelity measure with the strongest psychometric properties described in the order above (McIntosh et al., 2018). The SET was the most common measure to determine fidelity in Year 1 (21/25 = 84% schools) and Year 2 (15/23 = 65.2%). The TFI was the most common measure to determine fidelity in Years 3 (8/21 = 38/1%) and 4 (8/16 = 50%).

Survey Measure

A 9-item researcher-developed survey (see Appendix A) was used to identify perceived factors that impacted staff decisions to abandon and then later readopt SWPBIS in their schools.

Initial survey questions were developed collaboratively by the second and third authors, then reviewed by the fourth author who is an expert in SWPBIS and survey research. Feedback from the fourth author was incorporated into the final version of the survey questions. The survey contained both closed- and open-ended questions designed to examine (a) the critical features of SWPBIS that were stopped, (b) the amount of time that elapsed between abandoning and readopting SWPBIS practices, (c) perceived reasons why SWPBIS practices were abandoned, and (d) perceived reasons why SWPBIS practices were readopted. Individual response items for each of the closed-ended questions related to perceived reasons for abandonment and readoption were consistent with Tier 1 SWPBIS components reported in the TFI (Algozzine et al., 2014). For the purposes of this study, abandonment was defined as schools making an intentional decision to stop implementing SWPBIS or specific components of SWPBIS. This definition was reflected in the survey question asking participants select from closed and open-ended response options to identify if all or some SWPBIS components were stopped and later restarted (i.e., Regular Team Meetings for Data-based Decision Making, School-wide Acknowledgement Systems, all SWPBIS components). Readoption was defined as schools making an intentional decision to later restart the implementation of those components that were previously identified as being abandoned by the participants.

Procedure

Participants in the current study were recruited from the schools participating in their fourth year (2015-16 school year) in a larger longitudinal study (n = 330) that examined factors predictive of the sustained use of SWPBIS (McIntosh et al., 2013; McIntosh et al., 2018). Participants who indicated that their current school had previously abandoned SWPBIS and then later readopted were invited to participate in the current study. Specifically, participants selected "yes" to a question in the larger longitudinal study asking whether their schools had previously

abandoned SWPBIS or components of SWPBIS (i.e., “Has your school ever stopped implementing SWPBIS or critical components of SWPBIS [e.g., teaching school-wide behavioral expectations, implementing a school-wide acknowledgement system, regular SWPBIS team meetings; Algozzine et al., 2014] and then restarted implementing at a later date”). A total of 24 (7%) of the 330 study participants indicated that they worked in schools that had abandoned and later readopted SWPBIS practices. These 24 participants were contacted via email with an invitation to participate in the current study and a link to the online readoption survey. Participants were recruited in person during PBIS training events or by receiving a forwarded email invitation by state or district PBIS leaders contacted through the National Technical Assistance Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Participants were given two weeks to respond to the survey. After two weeks, an additional follow-up email was sent to participants to encourage them to participate. Of the 24 participants eligible to participate, 23 (96% response rate) completed the readoption survey for 30 schools for the current study.

Analysis

We used a mixed-methods approach to analyze participants’ closed and open-ended responses to questions in the readoption survey. For closed-ended items in which participants selected from a list of possible response options, we calculated basic descriptive statistics for mean item scores for each of the questions. For open-ended questions, or closed-ended items that included an open-ended response option when selecting “other,” we used a thematic coding process to analyze participant responses (Baron, 2008; Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process was useful for identifying new categories previously unidentified from closed-ended response options.

There were a total of 78 open-ended responses to survey items addressing research questions 2 and 3. Using an open coding process (Patton, 2002), we first reviewed and separated participants' responses into individual, standalone units. For example, if a participant responded Staff Turnover and Lack of Administrator Support were the reasons their school abandoned SWPBIS, then Staff Turnover and Lack of Administrator Support were coded as two separate units. Once the first author separated all open-ended data into units, he provided the third author with two examples and two non-examples of unitization. Using a random number generator, the third author then randomly selected 18 of the 78 (23%) open-ended responses and separated them into units for inter-rater agreement (IRA). IRA between the first and third authors for unitization was 90%. The two authors then met to discuss disagreements until 100% agreement was obtained. Following this unitization process, there was a total of 112 units.

After unitization, the first author examined all 112 units to identify patterns or common themes. When sorting through the data, the first author developed and continually revised a coding dictionary that contained operational definitions for each potential theme, which was adapted from Pinkelman, McIntosh, Rasplica, Berg, and Strickland-Cohen (2015). A minimum of two units was necessary to represent a unique category, as per a minimum criterion of 3% of total units per question (Patton, 2002). Categories were named for the overachieving idea or construct each represented. For IRA, the third author randomly selected and independently coded 26 of the 112 units (23%) using the coding dictionary, and IRA was 77%. The first and third author then met to discuss coding disagreements and revise the coding dictionary until 100% agreement was achieved. To improve IRA, the third author then randomly selected another 26 items to be coded by both raters. IRA between the third and first author improved to 90%. Disagreements were then discussed until 100% agreement was achieved.

Results

Abandoned Critical Features of SWPBIS

Our first research question sought to examine the critical features of SWPBIS that schools were most likely to report abandoning. After analyzing the data, we found the top three critical SWPBIS features most frequently abandoned were Regular Team Meetings for Data-based Decision Making (*n* = 17), School-wide Acknowledgement Systems (*n* = 14), and Continuum of Supports for Responding to Student Problem Behavior (*n* = 13). Other critical SWPBIS features that were reported as abandoned included: System for Regularly Collecting, Summarizing, and Sharing School-wide Discipline Data (*n* = 12), Collecting Fidelity Data (*n* = 9), and Explicitly Teaching School-wide Expectations (*n* = 7). Five (16.7%) of the participants indicated that their schools had stopped implementing all features of SWPBIS.

Perceived Reasons Schools Abandoned SWPBIS

Our second research question was to identify perceived reasons why schools stopped implementing SWPBIS. Based on closed-ended responses, the most frequently reported perceived reasons why schools abandoned SWPBIS were: Lack of Staff Buy-in, also referred to as lack of staff commitment to or enthusiasm for SWPBIS (Pinkelman et al., 2015; *n* = 17), Lack of School Administrative Support (*n* = 15), Lack of Staff Consistency (e.g., common language, consistency of implementation over time, staff working toward a common goal; *n* = 15), and Low Fidelity of Implementation (e.g., partial or sporadic implementation of critical SWPBIS components, *n* = 15). When describing a Lack of School Administrative Support, one participant wrote “[the] new principal has different views on [SW]PBIS and doesn’t see the importance of it as much” and another participant wrote “… if the leader of the school is not committed, the rest of your team will not be as committed as well.” Other less commonly reported categories are

presented in Figure 1 and Table 1. In addition, three more categories were identified from the open-ended coding process: Lack of Teaming from SWPBIS Members (e.g., failing to have regular implementation team meetings or full membership, failing to accomplish team goals; *n* = 5), Lack of Training and/or Coaching Provided to the Schools Implementing SWPBIS (*n* = 3), and Lack of Collaboration Among Team Members and Other School Staff to Implement SWPBIS (*n* = 2). Regarding a Lack of Collaboration, one participant stated that "staff were buying into [SW]PBIS, but the chairperson at the time did not want help from other staff to put together events for students, so there was only one event the whole year and it was in March."

Perceived Reasons Schools Readopted SWPBIS

Our final research question was to identify perceived reasons why schools readopted SWPBIS. A New School Administrator was the most frequently perceived reason for why schools readopted SWPBIS (*n* = 12). For example, one participant noted that the "new administrator was a team player and empowered staff to run the [SW]PBIS efforts." Other closed-ended responses included: Schools having District Support (e.g., providing resources, political or philosophical support; *n* = 11), Seeing Other Schools' Results (*n* = 4), and New or Additional Funding to assist with SWPBIS implementation (*n* = 1). When describing District Support as a reason for readoption, one participant wrote, "[the] district coach is meeting with [the] team on a regular basis." For Seeing Other Schools' Results as a reason for readoption, another participant wrote "seeing a school similar in size be successful was an excellent example to staff."

Eight additional categories were also identified from participants' open-ended responses for the perceived reasons why schools readopted SWPBIS, and these data are presented in Figure 2 and Table 1. Among the more common categories were: Renewed Staff Buy-in for SWPBIS (*n*

= 5), More Time for Implementation Activities (*n* = 5), Improved Teaming (e.g., new lead facilitator; *n* = 4), and SWPBIS being a District Mandate (*n* = 4). District Mandate was found to be different from District Support, because participants viewed District Mandate as a top-down priority from districts to schools. For example, one participant stated that "the superintendent insisted on the implementation of [SW]PBIS to try to reduce office discipline referrals and increase academic test scores," and another stated "relentless pressure from district administrators to implement [SW]PBIS." Other less frequently reported categories were: Effectiveness (*n* = 3), Continuous Regeneration (*n* = 3), Staff Noticing a Need for Change (*n* = 3), and Turnover of Staff who were Opposed to SWPBIS (*n* = 2).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify (a) critical features of SWPBIS most commonly abandoned by schools, (b) perceived reasons why schools abandoned SWPBIS, and (c) perceived reasons why schools readopted SWPBIS. Our findings indicate that the majority of schools abandoned some of the critical features of SWPBIS (25 of the 30 participating schools) instead of abandoning SWPBIS altogether (5 of the 30 participating schools). SWPBIS features most frequently abandoned were Regular Team Meetings for Data-based Decision Making, School-wide Acknowledgment Systems, and Continuum of Supports for Responding to Student Problem Behavior. We found the most commonly perceived reasons why schools abandoned SWPBIS to be Lack of Staff Buy-in, Lack of School Administrative Support, Lack of Staff Consistency, and Low Fidelity of Implementation. The most frequently reported reason as to why schools readopted SWPBIS was a New School Administrator, District Support, and Renewed Staff Buy-in. These findings provide valuable information related to research on the abandonment and readoption of SWPBIS and have important implications for practice.

Abandonment of Educational Initiatives

Previous studies have examined perceived barriers to SWPBIS implementation (Kincaid, Childs, Blase, & Wallace, 2007; Nese et al., 2016); however, the current study is novel in that we examined critical features of SWPBIS that were abandoned and perceived reasons why schools abandoned these features. Consistent with previous implementation and sustainability research (Kincaid et al., 2007; Pinkelman et al., 2015), the most frequently reported reasons why SWPBIS was abandoned in the current study included staff buy-in and school administrative support. Kincaid and colleagues (2007) found lack of staff buy-in to be the most common barrier to implementation among high and low implementing school teams. Similarly, Pinkelman and colleagues (2015) found staff buy-in to be the most frequently identified barrier and facilitator for sustaining SWPBIS from a national sample of 860 schools at different stages of implementation.

School administrator support was among the most reported reasons schools in the present study abandoned and readopted SWPBIS. The impact of school administration on SWPBIS implementation has also been discussed in previous research. For example, through conducting focus groups with school faculty, Bohanon, Wahnschaff, Flaherty, and Ferguson (2018) found that some faculty perceived specific school administrators' actions (i.e., lack of adherence or inconsistent use of school-wide policies and procedures supporting SWPBIS) to be problematic for SWPBIS implementation efforts. Without strong leadership and support for SWPBIS, staff may struggle to be united in their implementation efforts. Fixsen, Blase, Naoom, and Wallace (2009) described how leadership drivers can be used to promote implementation of effective programs. For example, districts administrators can promote implementation of SWPBIS and protect against abandonment of core features by recruiting and hiring school administrators and other staff with experience or training in implementing SWPBIS.

Readoption of Educational Initiatives

To our knowledge, this is the first study examining perceived reasons why schools readopt SWPBIS. Support from school and district administration were found to be the most commonly perceived reasons why schools readopted SWPBIS. These findings are consistent with related research examining sustained implementation of SWPBIS in schools and districts. For example, McIntosh and colleagues (2013) identified school priority as being a significant predictor of sustained implementation. School priority and commitment for educational initiatives are often influenced by building and district leadership through various forms (e.g., professional development, communication, ideology; Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010). For example, the extent to which building administrators allocate resources (e.g., space, supplies, time), show public support, and attend training activities are influential for the implementation of cognitive-behavioral interventions in schools (Forman et al., 2013). Similarly, George and colleagues (2018) found various forms of district support (e.g., having a district coordinator, providing technical assistance to schools, district teaming) to be associated with districts that had high concentrations of schools implementing SWPBIS with fidelity. Finally, it is possible that district support was closely related to other variables identified as being important to the readoption of SWPBIS in the current study. For example, Seeing Other Schools' Results may have been an implementation strategy used by district leadership to assist school teams during readoption.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations of this study that warrant discussion. First, even with the high response rate, only a small number of participants from the larger longitudinal study reported abandoning and then readopting SWPBIS. Given this small sample, it is possible that the information gleaned from the current study is not representative of all schools implementing

SWPBIS. Future research should include a larger sample of schools that have abandoned and readopted SWPBIS to confirm the findings of this study and identify other influential factors.

Second, because only one participant completed the survey for each school, it is possible the participants' perceptions of why schools abandoned and readopted SWPBIS are not consistent with the majority of personnel in those schools. For example, it is possible that the district coaches completing the survey perceived different variables as more or less important than internal school personnel. Moreover, although participants were recruited during SWPBIS training events or contacted by state and district SWPBIS leaders through email invitations, four of the internal school personnel who participated in this study did not identify as SWPBIS team members. Therefore, it is possible that these participants had limited knowledge of the features affecting SWPBIS implementation in their schools (e.g., district support, teaming, funding). Additionally, having more demographic information (e.g., educational background, years in the field, years in their current role, prior knowledge and experience with SWPBIS) would have been helpful. As we did not gather additional demographic information on the participants beyond their role in the schools during the year in which they completed the survey (i.e., Year 4), we also cannot evaluate their prior experiences with SWPBIS or the exact nature of their role as it pertained to the initial abandonment and later readoption of SWPBIS on their campus. Future research could also include multiple school staff that serve different roles in the same schools (e.g., administrator, SWPBIS team member) to complete the survey to identify shared perceived reasons why schools abandoned and later readopted SWPBIS. Multiple perspectives from individuals at the same school would allow for a richer description and deeper understanding of the factors related to abandonment and readoption. Also, including additional reports from staff

at the same schools would help to validate the reliability and validity of the survey measure used in this study.

Another limitation includes not assessing more direct influences that could have contributed to schools abandoning and readopting SWPBIS. For example, we did not ask participants when their schools had abandoned and readopted SWPBIS or specific components. If this information was available, we could have examined implementation fidelity before abandonment and after readoption to corroborate participant's perceived reasons schools had abandoned SWPBIS and identify other influences. Additionally, by identifying when schools had abandoned and readopted SWPBIS, future research could evaluate whether implementation factors, such as stage of implementation (i.e., initial implementation vs. full implementation; Fixsen et al., 2013) and changes in district support (e.g., increased or decreased funding for SWPBIS) influences these decisions.

Finally, the data used to answer the research questions were collected using the brief readoption survey that was created by the authors. Future research could consider using more rigorous qualitative methods, such as focus groups or interviews, to gain a deeper level of understanding about how the identified features in this study affected abandonment and readoption, beyond simply identifying them as influential. For example, future research could identify in what ways having a new administrator assisted schools with readopting SWPBIS. Future research could also examine whether the context or reasons for readoption of SWPBIS varied from initial adoption. For example, it would be interesting to examine whether schools that had previously abandoned SWPBIS put safeguards in place future abandonment.

Implications for Practice

Although preliminary, the results of this study present important implications for school teams in different stages of SWPBIS implementation (Fixsen et al., 2005). Results support that buy-in from district administrators, building administrators, and general school personnel is critical. Without strong leadership support, implementation is likely to suffer (Bohanon et al., 2018), which can result in school teams abandoning critical features or SWPBIS entirely. For school teams wishing to initially invest in or readopt SWPBIS, establishing support from district and school leadership is an important first step. Unified support from district and school leadership is likely to help school teams provide direction and consistency with SWPBIS implementation (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008). Strategies that can be utilized by district and school leadership teams may include sharing data with staff from local demonstration schools that have successfully implemented SWPBIS and engaging staff in implementation activities (Lohrmann et al., 2008). District and school leadership teams can also measure staff commitment to SWPBIS implementation efforts by using measures that directly assess staff commitment and buy-in, such as the Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports Action and Commitment Tool-Brief Version (i.e., PBIS-ACT Brief; Filter, Sytsma, & McIntosh, 2016).

In addition, unified leadership in support of SWPBIS is likely to reduce competing initiatives, which we found to be another common perceived reason schools abandoned SWPBIS. Finally, when readopting school-wide practices that have been abandoned, school leaders should identify ways to foster buy-in from school staff. This may include providing all staff with an understanding of why the practices were abandoned (i.e., the factors that led to abandonment) and the safeguards that will be put into place to help ensure successful implementation and prevent future abandonment.

Our findings also suggest that districts play an integral role in helping schools readopt SWPBIS. Support from districts may help struggling school teams readopt SWPBIS by investing more resources up front during readoption (e.g., increased technical assistance, communication, resources; George et al., 2018). For example, in the present study, regularly using data for decision making was found to be the most commonly abandoned SWPBIS component. Renewed or new district support could provide school teams with the technical assistance (e.g., external and internal coaching) necessary to help them use data for decision making more effectively and efficiently (Bohanon et al., 2018). Districts could also provide school teams working to readopt SWPBIS with more time to implement and introduce them to model exemplar schools, which were perceived by participants in the present study to be helpful in readoption.

Conclusion

The present study examined critical features of SWPBIS abandoned in schools and identified perceived reasons as to why schools abandoned and readopted SWPBIS. Our findings indicate that only a few schools stopped implementing all SWPBIS components. Perceived reasons school teams abandoned and readopted SWPBIS were largely related to district and school leadership and buy-in from school staff. Future research is needed to identify safeguards school teams can use to avoid future abandonment of evidence-based school initiatives.

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